

August 24, 2018

SEVERAL EXPOSED TO RABID STRAY CAT ON KNOLLWOOD STREET

Contact:

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Tampa, Fla. – A rabies alert has been issued by the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County (DOH-Hillsborough), following confirmation that a stray cat was rabid. The cat was located near the 4500 block of W Knollwood Street in Tampa (33614). Following an investigation, DOH-Hillsborough can confirm that three people were exposed on Tuesday, August 21. They are all receiving treatment.

The attack was unprovoked and the three victims are related. It is not known if others had contact with the brown tabby, domestic shorthair cat. No photo of the cat is available.

The rabies alert is for 60 days. The boundaries are:

- North – Waters Avenue
- South – Hillsborough Avenue
- East – Dale Mabry Highway
- West – Veterans Expressway

If someone was in the boundary and was bitten, scratched, or exposed to the saliva of a cat fitting the description or any wild animal, they are encouraged to contact DOH-Hillsborough on (813) 307-8059 and visit their preferred health care provider.

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans.

People should avoid contact with any animal that lives in the wild. Some may be tempted to feed or help the animal, but it isn't worth the risk. The only definitive way to determine if an animal has rabies is a lab examination. Last year, three animals exposed ten people.

In 2018, Hillsborough County has identified seven rabid animals (five cats, two bats and one raccoon) that exposed 18 people and four domestic dogs to the disease. It's clear that there are rabid animals living throughout the county and state.

An animal with rabies could infect other wild animals or domestic animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies. All domestic animals should be vaccinated against rabies and all wildlife contact should be avoided, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats, and coyotes.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact the Hillsborough County Pet Resource Center at (813) 744-5660.
- **Do not** handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- **Never** adopt wild animals or bring them into your home.
- Teach children **never** to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas, where they might encounter people and pets.
- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and report the injury to the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8059.

For further information on rabies, go to <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html> or call the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8000, or (813) 744-5660.

The Department works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

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